

**SECTION 6.** In Colorado Revised Statutes, **add** 23-1-131.5 as follows:

**23-1-131.5. Commission directive - Colorado Re-Engaged (CORE) initiative - four-year institutions - associate degrees - report - definitions.**

(1) as used in this section, unless the context otherwise requires:

(a) "Colorado re-engaged initiative" or "CORE initiative" means the initiative created in this section to authorize institutions to award associate degrees to eligible students.

(b) "eligible student" means an undergraduate student who meets the criteria specified in subsection (5) of this section.

(c) "institution of higher education" or "institution" means a local district college operating pursuant to Article 71 of this Title 23 or a state institution of higher education as defined in section 23-18-102 (10)(a), but not including an institution governed by the State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education.

(2) there is created in the Department the Colorado Re-Engaged, or CORE, initiative to authorize institutions of higher education to award associate degrees, notwithstanding an institution's role and mission, to eligible students who enroll in baccalaureate degree programs and earn at least seventy credit hours in the programs, but withdraw from the institutions before attaining the baccalaureate degree. The goal of awarding an associate degree through the CORE initiative is to increase a student's earning potential by granting the student a degree, making it more likely the student will re-enroll and complete a baccalaureate degree or higher.

(3) the Commission shall collaborate with the institutions of higher education to develop and coordinate a process to identify eligible students and award associate degrees through the CORE initiative. To implement the CORE initiative, the role of the Department is to:

(a) publicize the CORE initiative, including the eligibility requirements that a student must meet to obtain an associate degree through the CORE initiative as described in subsection (5) of this section; and

(b) work with the institutions to identify eligible students and notify those eligible students of their eligibility to obtain an associate degree through the CORE initiative and the process for doing so.

(4) (a) the role of an institution that chooses to participate in the CORE initiative is limited to:

- (i) providing to the department contact information for eligible students, if available;
- (ii) determining whether an eligible student qualifies for an associate degree based on earned credits and courses taken;
- (iii) issuing an associate degree upon the request of an eligible student and advising the student of opportunities to re-enroll at the institution to complete the baccalaureate degree program; and
- (iv) submitting to the department the information described in subsection (6) of this section.

(b) an institution that chooses to participate in the CORE initiative must obtain approval from the institution's accrediting agency to grant associate degrees through the CORE initiative. An institution may award an associate degree to an eligible student through the CORE initiative for up to ten academic years after the last semester in which the eligible student enrolled at the institution.

(c) an institution that chooses to participate in the CORE initiative shall not allow a student to enroll in the institution to obtain an associate degree and shall not offer programs that are designed to lead to associate degrees; except that this subsection (4)(c) does not apply to a local district college, Adams State University, Fort Lewis College with regard to the authority granted in section 23-52-101 (2)(a), and Colorado Mesa University. the associate degrees issued by institutions through the CORE initiative shall not be considered in determining an institution's funding pursuant to part 3 of Article 18 of this Title 23.

(5) (a) to receive an associate degree through the CORE initiative, a student must:

(i) not have transferred to the institution directly ~~from an~~ AFTER EARNING FIFTEEN OR MORE CREDIT HOURS FROM ANY SINGLE institution governed by the State Board of Community Colleges and Occupational Education; [amended July 2023 by HB23-1262]

(ii) not have been enrolled in the institution for at least two consecutive semesters; and

(iii) have earned at least seventy credit hours, which credits must include completion of the institution's general education CORE course requirements and completion of all other courses required for an associate degree program approved by the Commission.

(b) notwithstanding any provision of this section to the contrary, a student who is eligible to receive an associate degree through a program authorized in section 23-1-131 is not eligible to receive an associate degree through the CORE initiative.

(6) each institution that chooses to participate in the CORE initiative shall, by August 1, 2022, and by August 1 each year thereafter, report to the department the number of eligible students to whom the institution awarded an associate degree through the CORE initiative, the types of associate degrees awarded through the CORE initiative, and the number of students who re-enrolled in the institution after receiving an associate degree through the CORE initiative. the department shall review and compile the annual reports and, by January 15, 2025, submit to the education committees of the senate and the house of representatives, or any successor committees, a report concerning implementation of the CORE initiative, including, to the extent discernable, the degree to which students who receive associate degrees through the CORE initiative re-enroll in an institution to complete a baccalaureate degree. the department may also include in the report recommendations for changes to the CORE initiative, including recommendations for incentives to encourage institutions to participate in the CORE initiative.

[CORE fact sheet from CDHE](#)

[Full HB21-1330 Bill as approved](#)